

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 02861 110810Z

43

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SY-04 AID-20 DRC-01 IO-14 NIC-01 /166 W

----- 119422

R 101630Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5463

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 2861

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, TS, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET SPY TRIAL: SIX CONVICTED

REF: TUNIS 5669, SEPT. 27 1973

1. SUMMARY: TRIAL OF FORMER NOVOSTY REP VALERY KOSAVKOV AND EIGHT TUNISIANS ACCUSED OF BEING PART OF SOVIET ESPIONAGE RING AS REPORTED REFTEL CONCLUDED MAY 6 WITH CONVICTION KOSAVKOV (IN ABSENTIA) AND FIVE TUNISIANS. SENTENCES OF LATTER RANGED FROM 3 TO 10 YEARS HARD LABOR. THREE OF DEFENDENTS, INCLUDING TRADE UNION (UGTT) OFFICIAL , WERE ACQUITTED. GOT TOOK MATTER VERY SERIOUSLY. TRIAL WAS NOTEWORTH FOR HEAVY AND DETAILED PUBLICITY IT RECEIVED OVER PAST WEEK AS GOT APPARENTLY WANTED WARN TUNISIANS ABOUT DANGERS OF CONTACT WITH SOVIETS AND OTHER SUSPECT FOREIGNERS. FACT THAT TRIAL HELD AT TIME GOT ACCUSING "MARXIST-LENINIST" ELEMENTS HERE AND ABROAD OF FOMENTING UNIVERSITY STRIKE MAY HAVE STRENGTHENED GOT HAND IN DEALING WITH LATTER. GOT RELATIONS WITH USSR CERTAINLY NOT IMPROVED. MAIN EFFECT OF TRIAL AND PUBLICITY MAY BE TO MAKE TUNISIANS LESS OPEN WITH ALL FOREIGN PRESS AND SOME OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS THATN THEY HAVE BEEN HERETOFORE. END SUMMARY.

2. STATE SECURITY COURT APRIL 29 OPENED TRIAL OF
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TUNIS 02861 110810Z

EIGHT TUNISIANS ACCUSED OF VIOULATING ARTICLES OF PENAL

CODE CONCERNING TREASON AND COMPLICITY IN CRIME OF ESPIONAGE COMMITTED BY NINTH ACCUSED (KOSAVKOV) OF FOREIGN NATIONALITY. TUNISIANS TRIED WERE THREE MOFA FUNCTIONARIES INCLUDING A POUCH/CODE CLERK AND AN OFFICER CONCERNED WITH EAST EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, ONE EMPLOYEE FROM EACH OF PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, TOPOGRAPHIC SERVICE, AND INFORMATION MINISTRY, A UGTT REGIONAL SECRETARY AND A JOURNALIST.

3. LOCAL PRESS MAY 1-4 REPORTED AT LENGTH ON PROSECUTOR'S EXAMINATION OF DEFENDANTS (REPORTS CARRIED IN FBIS DAILY FILE). DEFENSE ATTORNEYS BEGAN PLEAS MAY 4 (ALSO CARRIED IN PRESS AND PRESUMABLY AVAILABLE IN FBIS REPORTS.) APPARENTLY GOT EVIDENCE OF PAYMENTS MADE BY KOSAVKOV WAS BASED ENTIRELY ON CONFESSIONS OF DEFENDANTS. FOREIGN MINISTER HIMSELF ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY, BEFORE VERDICT HANDED DOWN, THAT ACTUAL INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS PASSED TO SOVIETS WERE OF LITTLE IF ANY SENSITIVITY. SEVERAL DEFENSE LAWYERS PROTESTED FACT THEIR CLIENTS HELD WITHOUT ACCESS TO COUNSEL FOR TWO MONTHS BEFORE ARRAIGNMENT, BUT SUCH DETENTION IS PERMISSIBLE UNDER TUNISIAN LAW IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

4. PUBLIC ACCOUNTS OF TRIAL DEALT WITH ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES NOT ONLY OF KOSAVKOV BUT ALSO OF FORMER SOVIET EMBASSY THIRD SECRETARY ALEXANDRE SAVYELEV AND SECOND SECRETARY VITALI KROKHINE, BOTH DECLARED PNG WHEN ARRESTS WERE MADE. KOSAVKOV, WITH TOUCH OF IRONY, SENTENCED TO PERPETUAL HARD LABOR IN ABSENTIA.

5. TWO REFERENCES WERE MADE IN PRESS ACCOUNTS TO ATTEMPTS BY SOVIETS TO USE TUNISIAN NATIONALS TO OBTAIN INFO ON U.S. EMBASSY PERSONNEL THROUGH HOUSEHOLD SERVANT. PRESS STATED IN ONE CASE AND WE HAVE INDEPENDENTLY CONFIRMED IN BOTH CASES THAT THESE EFFORTS WERE UNSUCCESSFUL.

6. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST SUCH SPY RING BROKEN IN TUNISIAN, AND UNDOUBTEDLY CONSTITUTES RUDE SHOCK TO GOT ESTABLISHMENT. SOVIETS APPARENTLY HAD ACCESS FOR MONTHS TO DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN MOFA AND MAJOR FOREIGN CAPITALS. WHILE FROM OUR STANDPOINT SOVIETS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TUNIS 02861 110810Z

MAY HAVE OVERVALUED THE SUVSTANCE OF WHAT THEY COULD OBTAIN THROUGH MOFA, IT SEEMS CLEAR BOTH SOVIETS AND TUNISIANS CONSIDERED THE PENETRATION SIGNIFICANT. HEAVY PUBLICITY ACCORDED TRIAL WAS UNUSUAL, BUT SIMILAR TO THAT GIVEN LAST PREVIOUS STATE SECURITY COURT TRIAL (THAT OF AHMED BEN SALAH IN 1969.) PUBLIC AIRING OF FULL SOVIET ROLE HAS NO DOUBT FURTHER COOLED TUNISIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS, AND IT PERHAPS IRONIC THAT FONMIN CHATTI RECIEVED BY

GROMYKO IN DAMASCUS SIMULTANEOUSLY. ALSO PERTINENT IS FACT THAT TRIAL HELD WHILE DIFFICULT STUDENT STRIKES WERE UNDERWAY, WITH GOT CONCERNED THAT THEY CHIEFLY THE RESULT OF COMMUNIST AND OTHER LEFTIST, FOREIGN-BASED INVOLVEMENT WITH STUDENTS. IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT GOT HAS USED TRIAL PUBLICITY TO WARN NOT LNLY CIVIL SERVANTS BUT ALL TUNISIANS OF DANGERS IN CONTACTS WITH BOTH FOREIGN PRESS AND SUSPECT EMBASSIES. TUNISIANS WHO IN RECENT YEARS HAVE BEEN FAIRLY OPEN WITH OFFICIAL FOREIGN COMMUNITY MAY NOW BE MORE CAUTIOUS. THIS WOULD AFFECT BLOC EMBASSIES MOST SEVERELY BUT COULD ALSO HAVE IMPACT ON OUR CONTACTS. INCIDENT HAS ALREADY HAD NOTICEABLE EFFECT ON OUR CONTACTS WITH UGTT: SINCE LAST OCTOBER WHEN UGTT LEADER ARRESTED, OUR MEETINGS WITH UGTT OFFICIALS HAVE REQUIRED SECRETARY GENERAL'S ADVANCE APPROVAL.
SEE OYE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PENAL SYSTEM, ESPIONAGE AGENTS, ARRESTS, TRIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974TUNIS02861
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740116-0156
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740555/aaaabxgg.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: TUNIS 5669, SEPT. 27 1973
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET SPY TRIAL: SIX CONVICTED
TAGS: PINS, TS, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005